Rep. Thomas P. O'Neill
House of Representatives Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20515

July 1, 1977

Dear Mr. Speaker,

The Los Angeles chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi, wishes to express its strong protest to you over the conduct of two staff members for the House Select Committee on Assassinations and the apparent support of their actions by committee chairman Rep. Richardson Preyer and staff director Thomas W. Lambeth.

As you should already be aware from a letter from radio newsman Art Kevin of Los Angeles, committee investigator Clifford A. Fenton and assistant deputy chief counsel Kenneth Klein used Kevin as a middleman to contact Loren Eugene Hall, a witness they wanted to interview. Although it is denied by the staff members, Kevin maintains Hall agreed to be interviewed, but only if Kevin was present and Klein and Fenton agreed. Yet, when the two staff members met with Hall and Kevin, the newsman was immediately asked to leave because allegedly sensitive matters were to be discussed with Hall. Viewing such a request as a major breach of the original agreement, Kevin refused to leave, Hall refused to talk and the staff members then presented Hall with a subpoena dated and signed a full week earlier.

Such actions we believe represent a clear attempt to deceive a newsman to get to a source the FBI had been unable to locate previously. Because of the government's breach of integrity, as Hall promised he would, instead of voluntarily talking to investigators he refused to testify when he appeared before the committee under subpoena June 7.

We are of course aware of the importance of the Assassination Committee's work and the difficulty in finding key witnesses. But such actions by the committee staff we consider reprehensible. Mr. Kevin is a distinguished broadcast journalist locally whose integrity and honesty is well known. On the otherhand, the committee's staff members have all the reason to deny any such agreement to allow Kevin to sit in on the interview. We choose to believe Kevin's and Hall's version of the facts.

We would hope that as the leader of the House you would make it known that you do not condone such tactics by representatives of your committees and do what you can to make sure there is not a repeat of such an incident with the Assassinations Committee or any other.

Sincerely,

Robert Rawitch

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cc: Rep. Richardson Preyer
Sen. Alan Cranston
Sen. S.I. Hayakawa
Art Kevin